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Say Cheese! Brand New Cheese Factory at WKU

52 Weeks of Public Health Campaign Spotlight: Milk Safety Team Designs Cheese Lab

FRANKFORT, Ky. (XXX XX, 2016) – As part of the 52 Weeks of Public Health campaign, the Kentucky Department of Public Health (DPH) within the Cabinet of Health and Family Services (CHFS) highlights a new cheese factory at Western Kentucky University designed and regulated by the Milk Safety team at DPH. The Cheese Factory at WKU began operating this past spring and now makes up to several batches a month.

Paul Woosley, Assistant Chairman of the Department of Agriculture at Western said, “The idea is to teach our students and farmers in the region a way to add a value to their product especially milk to increase their income and go back to the small family farm and make a living”. When considering making cheese from the milk that cows produce on WKU’s dairy farm, the department reached out to DPH for help. Lewis Ramsey, Branch Manager for the Milk Safety Environmental Health at DPH said, “We receive all kinds of calls from people whether they want to put on dairy farms through a processing plant, or make cheese like WKU’s cheese plant. The first step is to contact us. We set up a couple of meetings; we come out and visit on site to see what potential is there and how this works.”

Ramsey’s Milk Safety team, which includes Frank Jackson and Carl Phelps, is the Kentucky Milk Safety Branch in charge of making sure the plant meets the regulatory requirements to protect public health, but still have enough leeway to make things happen. Ramsey said, “One unique situation that we had with this particular plant is they also milk the cows here, and they use the milk from the cows in a different facility about two or three hundred yards down the road, so we had to figure out how to transport the milk from the farm to the plant”. So Ramsey and his team designed a specially equipped, regulation milk tank truck to transport the milk from the cows to the cheese factory. A link to video of the truck and the cheese making process is included in this release. The several varieties of cheese will be available for students to purchase on campus, and will be sold at local farmer’s market.

Link to video:

https://youtu.be/_PXZx4e--8

Throughout the planned 52 Weeks of Public Health promotion, DPH will spotlight a specific public health issue. Additional information about the campaign is available on the DPH website:
<http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/default.htm> and will be posted on the CHFS Facebook page:



<http://www.facebook.com/kychfs> where Kentuckians are encouraged to like and share posts among their networks of friends.

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services, the Department for Public Health, and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.